

CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

Tuesday, 25th Nov. 1947.

Most of the time at Tuesday's session was taken up by several deputies who followed Taquiddin's example in attacking Jumblat's unrestrained statements of the previous day.

The first to take the floor was Suleiman Ali, but he postponed his address when he noticed the absence of the Premier.

Zwein followed. He expressed his sympathy with the Zahle victims and then proceeded to explain an important grievance of the Lebanese emigrants. Briefly, this was that during the war, when communications between the motherland and the emigrants were severed, the various cadastral surveys that were made had caused the registration in the names of resident relatives of properties properly belonging to emigrants. The emigrants ~~were~~ now demanded the transfer of the registrations to their own names. Justice Minister answered that gov. was giving due consideration to subject.

Tacla then took the floor and delivered a vehement invective against Jumblat. Jumblat had asked for the "liberation" of the country, but from whom did he want to liberate it? Was it from the Mandate, the texts of the law, or the present rulers? If it was from the present rulers that he wanted to liberate the country then he should know that these very rulers were responsible for the country's independence and that they had striven and would always strive to promote the interests of the country.

Tacla shared Jumblat's sympathy with the Zahle victims but could not understand Jumblat's encouragement of the town to "take vengeance".

If Jumblat had been calling for a rebellion, then he was acting in a way incompatible with his duties as deputy. For Lebanon refused to be the scene of rebellions.

If on the other hand Jumblat had been seeking reform, then he should appreciate that reform was never brought about through violence. He would be better serving his country if he were to submit to the Chamber a comprehensive reform programme which could be discussed and studied.

Ibrahim Azar then took the floor. He reminded the deputies of the old incident when Jumblat left the Chamber in anger declaring that he would return with the force of arms. "But Jumblat returned quietly and participated in the gov. without effecting any reform", Azar said.

Azar concluded by demanding that "the appropriate attitude be adopted towards Jumblat" considering that yesterday also, he had left without returning.

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Khalil Abu Jandeh followed. He asked the gov. about the "ugly accusations" which Jumblat had made against senior gov. officials and deputies. He said that the question of Jumblat's "verbal excesses" must be discussed, just as the gov. must inquire about the various charges made by Jumblat and inform the Chamber of their veracity.

Abu Jandeh then referred to another subject. He wanted to know how it was that the Petrol Cos. had found it possible to revert to the normal petrol supplies although a few days earlier they had declared that the necessary petrol quantities were lacking. The Cos'. action, he declared, had resulted in the death and injury of several Lebanese citizens and a gov. statement on the subject was therefore necessary.

Adaab Ferzeli then attacked Jumblat whom he described as "selfish and irresponsible".

Michel Mufarrrij then denied the presence of an illegal element in his obtaining, as an oil merchant, the sum of \$1,000,000 from the Ministry of Economy. Mufarrrij demanded a gov. statement on the subj.

Suleiman Ali then took the floor. He drew gov. attention to the needs of Halba and Akkar in the North which had not yet received their monthly rations and denied that communist elements as the Economy Minister had stated were fomenting trouble in those districts. "Yet", he declared, "even communists are human beings and must eat".

Ali then demanded that the gov. should adopt a firm stand towards all fomenters of trouble, so that honest citizens demanding redress of grievances should be distinguished from these fomenters.

Ali then generally criticized gov. action in Zahle. He asserted that the inhabitants of the town were peacefully inclined as was evident from the Monday demonstrations and that the despatch of the army was a short-sighted and irresponsible action.

Riad Bey then took the floor. He expressed his surprise that Ali should have so suddenly exposed the cause of the opposition, although "until yesterday he was our ally". Riad Bey then affirmed that according to the muhafaz of the North the people of Halba and Akkar had themselves rejected the rations when offered to them.

He continued to criticize the repeated attacks against the Lebanese Army which he stated should always remain above reproach. He then outlined the reasons for the despatch of the army to Kahle (very much on yesterday's lines), and asserted that he had mentioned communism only once in his statement of the previous day (which, is, of course, an incorrect assertion). He went on to say that had the military regulations been fully applied at Zahle "hundreds would have been killed".

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In answer to the statements of Jumblat he said that many of the cases to which reference had been made by Jumblat were being considered either by the gov. or by the Law Courts.

As to rations, these were amply available in the country which was much better off than many other countries. Also, Riad Bey assured the Chamber, there was no food crisis although there was "a political crisis in the spirits of certain people who wanted to interfere in everything". Riad Bey did not wish to be taken as referring to the drivers "whose strike was a genuine strike just as the strikes for rations were also genuine strikes" but for the "second and last time" he wished to state that "there were destructive communist elements in the country".

Riad Bey concluded by stating that the Lebanese had sworn loyalty and allegiance to the present Regime and to a Covenant (Arab League?) which all had willingly accepted. Only death could put an end to this loyalty. And as for reform, this was the objective of every one, but reform was not as easily done as said since it demanded perseverance and time for mature fruition.

The Chamber then discussed and ratified various allocations, after the physician-deputies interpellated the gov. with respect to the reports that first aid had been withheld from the Kahle victims and that many innocent inhabitants had been indiscriminately injured.

The Chamber then adjourned.

W. K.